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. L. EVERNGAM, DENTON, MARYLAND | J. L. EVERNGAM, DENTON, MARYLAND

OUR ANNUAL AFTER XMAS SALE OF CLOTHING
Men's, Women's and Children's, Starts Monday, 3rd

Winter Suits and Overcoats

FOR MEN. The Annual Before Stock-Taking Clearance, with the Biggest Bargains of the Whole Year.

The mild fall left us overstocked; we are forced to offer the following in remarkable range of styles, materials, patterns

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Were - - 15.00, now 10.50
Were $10.50 and $12.50, now $ 7.50
Were - - 18.50, now 13.50
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10 Suits at $20.50, now $15.50
16 Suits at 18.50, now 14.50
20 Suits at $17.50, now $12.50
55 Suits at $16.50, $15, $12.50, now $10
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How Billy Emerson Walked Into His Own Trap

A Christmas Story

By RUTH GRAHAM

Billy Emerson was twenty-one, a nice fellow, as the girls would put it, handsome and rich. It is questionable if young men born with silver spoons in their mouths are fortunate. They have no careers before them, or, rather, no careers are forced on them, and few persons will work who do not have to work. Billy was in no regular business; consequently time hung heavy on his hands, and he was always hunting for some amusement. He once said that he would rather be a housebreaker than himself, for he would love an exciting life instead of a dull one.

Billy disliked cold weather, and when the autumn came on he usually went to a southern climate. Nice was his favorite winter resort, but, tiring of all European places, he concluded one autumn to go to a seabeach in Virginia. Not finding the climate there warm enough for him, he drifted down to Florida, where he put up at one of the swell hotels at St. Augustine.

It was a month before Christmas when the young man started on this outing, and not to be deprived of the pleasure of giving the customary presents on account of his absence he devoted a week before leaving to their purchase. Since he was an orphan with no brothers or sisters the time he devoted to the purpose would seem unnecessary, but Billy had one good trait—he interested himself in impecunious persons. The main enjoyment he received from his large fortune was making the needy happy by supplying their necessities. Having arranged for a showering of gifts on Christmas day, he sailed away.

Billy was used to sitting in the sun parlor in the morning, where other guests congregated. Not having anything better to do, he observed such persons as interested him, but it was a very dull way of spending the time, and he longed for something to stir him up. There was a young lady in the house who was taking care of her invalid mother. The girl's face was Madonna-like, and it seemed to Billy that any one she loved she would sacrifice for, even to her life. Billy wished she would love him.

One day this young lady was sitting in an easy chair, basking in the sun, when something seemed suddenly to occur to her. Rising quickly, she hurried away, leaving a fat portemonnaie in the chair she had occupied. It occurred to Billy that here was an opportunity to scrape an acquaintance. He would take up the article and when the young lady returned for her purse hand it to her. Stepping briskly to the portemonnaie, he seized it and was putting it in his pocket when the young lady, doubtless having missed it, returned. Billy was caught in the act.

Now, what it was that induced him to deny the theft he could hardly himself explain. He says it was because if he told her that he took the portemonnaie simply to return it to her she would not believe him, and he saw an adventure in a final confession, proving his respectability at the same time. This would cause her to feel that she had wronged him and give him a great advantage. Quite likely the pained look on the girl's face that followed one of surprise had something to do with his action. Be this as it may, he denied having seen the missing article, not having any very definite plan of subsequent action.

"Give me my portemonnaie," she said. "I saw you take it. To think that such a respectable looking person should be a common"—

She balked at the word thief. It was too contemptuous a word to apply to so respectable appearing a person.

"If you knew my motive," said Billy, "you would have sympathy for me."

"What motive?"

"The blessed Christmas season is coming, and I have nothing with which to buy gifts for my dear mother and five young brothers and sisters."

A pitying expression came over the girl's face, a mingling of pain, sympathy and forgiveness. It made Billy feel that to elicit such an expression he would rob a bank.

"Keep the money," said the girl, "and if there is not enough to buy gifts for all I will add to it. But return my portemonnaie and the other contents. They were given me last Christmas by my dear mother."

Billy hung his head. It seemed as if he had been touched by this kindly magnanimity, and repentance was beginning to well up within him. Taking the portemonnaie from his pocket, he handed it to her without opening it. She took some bills there were in it and handed them to him.

"No," he said. "You have made me see the error of my ways. I am repentant. Call for the police and have me locked up."

As the perpetrator of this stupendous bluff well knew, the girl would do no such thing. But when she told him that she forgave him and would do nothing to interfere with any good resolutions he might make for his future the scamp protested that she was not doing her duty.

"You have no right to permit me to go free," he said mournfully. "You are risking the valuables of every one in this house. How do you know but that I will go on in my pernicious way? It is your duty to hand me over to the authorities, or rather to inform the proprietors of this hotel that they are harboring a thief. They will have me arrested and lodged in jail. I will pay the penalty of my wickedness and when I have expiated it will take the path into which I have been led by your magnanimity."

"That is not necessary. All you have to do is to leave this house, promising me that you will lead an honest life from this time forward. Besides, the motive for your crime must be considered. You were not stealing for yourself, but to give pleasure to those you love."

That was all very well except leaving the house, which Billy had no intention of doing.

"If I am to be trusted," he said, switching off from the previous argument, "I may as well remain here as anywhere. You have my promise that I will never steal again."

Billy was relieved from explaining how he was to remain in a house the lowest priced room of which was $5 a day—Billy's suit was $25—by the approach of other persons, and with a look of gratitude he left the sun parlor.

Billy, not knowing but that the girl would make a confidant of some one who would not be as lenient with him as the young lady and he would be put to considerable trouble to explain his theft, concluded to take a precaution. He was chummy with the clerk of the hotel and told him the story. Since Billy was well known to the management, this bit of advance knowledge was all that was necessary to prevent trouble. Billy learned from the clerk that the young lady was Miss Helena Clarke of New York.

Shortly after Billy's theft and return of the stolen property a Mr. and Mrs. Ballinger came down from the north and stopped under the same roof with him. The first Billy knew of their arrival was seeing them hobnobbing with Mrs. Clarke and her daughter. Billy winced. He had been led by circumstances into doing what would put him into a position which would, to say the least, be considered foolish and had come to realize that any transition to his own respectable self would be humiliating. The arrival of these friends, mutual to himself and the Clarkes, might bring about a denouement before he was ready for one. At the same time if he wished for a voucher the new arrivals would serve the purpose admirably. Billy determined to keep out of their way until he could think up a way out of his dilemma. But the more he thought the more he became impressed with the fact that there was no way out of it unless he should concoct a bigger deception than the one he had practiced. While he was trying to invent a story the Clarkes departed for the north. Billy, having learned all about them from his friends the Ballingers, took his own departure for home.

It was now a couple of weeks before Christmas. Billy went to his bank and procured a certificate of deposit in the name of Helena Clarke; then, going home, he inclosed it in a note saying that he was the man who had been saved from an ignominious career by her kindness. A miserly uncle had died and left him a large fortune. Would Miss Clarke kindly distribute for him the inclosed amount for the poor at Christmas time? If so she would go far in helping him to forget the sin the remembrance of which was embittering his life.

"Well," said Billy to himself, "if I can't keep her from setting me down for a fool I can at least prepare the way for a confession." And with this he sealed his note and dropped it in a mail box. A reply soon came to him from Miss Clarke showing plainly that she had swallowed this story as well as the other. She promised to dispense his Christmas charity and asked if there was anything else she could do to encourage him in making his reformation permanent. Billy replied that he thought she could, but he would speak of that later.

Meanwhile the Ballingers had returned to New York. Billy went to Mrs. Ballinger, told her of the fix he was in and asked her to help him out of it. The lady at once wrote the Clarkes an invitation to a Christmas dinner, declining to take no for an answer. A reply came accepting the invitation. Billy was also invited.

Mr. Emerson says that the most courageous act of his life was when he walked into Mrs. Ballinger's drawing room that Christmas day and beheld Miss Clarke arrayed in dinner costume, looking, it seemed to him, beautifully cold. Mrs. Ballinger had promised him that she would announce to Miss Clarke that he would be one of the dinner company and make his confession for him. She had also insured him a not unkindly reception. What was Billy's relief when the young lady, with a charming smile, extended her hand to him.

It seemed that a leaden coat of trouble had peeled off him and left him light as a feather.

"Do tell me," she said when they were seated side by side, "what induced you to confess a crime that you had not committed?"

Billy's resource came to his aid.

"I was caught red handed, wasn't I? Well, if I had told you that I had taken your portemonnaie you might not have believed me."

"But I would."

"That I wasn't sure of. But of another thing I was sure. If I carried out the appearance of a theft with subsequent confession and contrition I knew by that kindliness which showed itself in your every feature that you would forgive me and I would run no risk."

"Wasn't that thoughtful of you!" she replied with a suspicion of a blush. The rest was easy, and it proved a merry and happy Christmas for both of them.

Natural Protection.

It has been pointed out that to some ground animals nature's color scheme for concealment furnishes almost complete protection. The quail crouching on the ground looks like a bunch of dried leaves. Many snakes and fishes take the precise color of surrounding sand and water. A mackerel from above looks like a fleeting ripple, while to fish enemies beneath his white belly will not show against the higher colors of sky and water. The wonderfully beautiful changes of dolphins and chameleons were not evolved to please the eye, but to protect their lives.

All Wrong.

The popular actor had become a soldier. In a hotly contested skirmish he distinguished himself by his courage and gallantry.

"Well, well," said he at the end of the action, "what do you think of that? Not a soul's applauding."—New York Post.

Indisputable Evidence

A Christmas Story

By IDA SPEED

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When Miss Cecilia Cary come to this western country from back east to teach music she was regarded as a rank outsider.

Old man Seeberger, whose word ain't worth 10 cents, but whose signature is worth all of $10,000, said the first Sunday she sung before preachin' that when she got up on them high notes she put him in mind of a bronc when it's been throwed and gits to gaspin' and wheezin' as the rope is tightened.

But old man Seeberger's opinion was not shared by all the male population of Clanahans, for them boys shore swarmed, and, rattle the planner and holler her vocal singin' as she would, she couldn't git 'em to settle.

She went to boardin' with the Widow Hughes when she first come. Bill Hughes was gittin' up some horses one day and was doin' a fast piece of ridin' when his mount turned over with him. Gopher hole, you know, Bill under the whole works.

Never spoke afterward, and in two hours his pretty young wife was known as the Widow Hughes, and in spite of much persistent courtin' she's known as that yet.

It looked once like her and Red Martin was goin' to make a hitch up of it, but that seemed to fizzle out, and he was one of the leaders with Miss Cary when she first come, for Red is the leadin' kind.

He done in this case same as he had with several women before—hit the trail to Arizona with a herd, right when he seemed to have a walkover, and Hick Fuller and Sam Harman took his place so complete he never was missed.

Now, maybe you've noticed how a woman does about a solitary diamond ring. If her folks give it to her or she buys it herself she'll always try to let on like it come from her beau.

If a feller gives it to her she'll intimate that it's a present from her pa.

So nobody knew where nor just when Mrs. Hughes come by her ring. In fact, very little was said or thought about it, as Bill had a accident policy, until she raised a great hue and cry about it bein' stole.

Chances are few for robbery here, where everybody knows everybody else and there ain't no suspicious characters, such as crooks, hoboes, promoters and the like, so it shore looked plumb odd when Miss Cecilia Cary moved over to the Citizens' hotel to board and simultaneous begun to wear a diamond the size as the one the widow Hughes had lost, only in a woman's ring instead of a heavy settin' like Minnie Hughes had wore.

This would not have looked so bad by itself, but Adolph Warner, who was the postmaster and express agent, knew that Miss Cecilia had sent off a small registered package one day just before she changed her boardin' place.

He said he remembered it particular, because while she was waitin' for her receipt at the postoffice window Red Martin got up from off the cracker box he was settin' on back by the stove and told her if she was ready to go he would walk home with her, as he was leavin' as soon as the rest of the outfit come by.

Adolph said she told Red all right and that she was goin' to be on the move that day too.

Red says, "Where to?"

And she tells him the Citizens' hotel, and he says, "Good," and then Adolph handed the receipt to her, and they walked out together.

Some days later she gits a express package about the size of the one she sent off by mail, and then she comes out in that diamond ring.

Well, Minnie Hughes never accused nobody, but she hinted powerful, and folks come to cool off on Miss Cecilia.

She never seemed to notice it, but just played her hand with Sam and Hick, who stood by her manful and knocked the whey out of a feller or two apiece who merely related the facts in the case concernin' Minnie Hughes' ring.

There was some talk of takin' pupils away from Miss Cecilia, but as her patrons had paid six months in advance in order to git her to come they didn't quite give way to their feelin's to that extent.

The kids she gives lessons to all was crazy about her anyhow, and they was all learnin' fast.

In the store one day the little Harman girl, Sam's sister, was holdin' her teacher's hand, and she says, "Miss Cary, where did that pretty ring come from?"

Miss Cary looked around like she was seein' who'd heard, and her face got awful red.

"I haven't got any change with me," she says to the Harman muchacha, "but let's see if my credit is good for a dime's worth of peanut candy and a dozen apples."

And she shuts the kid's mouth by stuffin' it full of trash to eat.

Things rocked along until Christmas, with more talk of that ring than anything else, and then folks begun to try to decide what they'd like to have so as to give it to some of their family or friends for a Christmas gift, and gossip turned to the big dance that was to come off on the night of the 25th, with fireworks before and after.

Christmas eve five of them pesky cowboys from the Lazy M blew into Clanahans with a flourish of six shooters and rope and drag off everybody's flue that they can reach, leavin' us in a fix when the norther come up Christmas mornin', so that the hall where the dance was to be pulled off, bein' the only two story buildin' in the burg and havin' a big heater in it, was resorted to by young and old as a warm refuge from the storm.

Hick Fuller had Miss Cecilia Cary's company for that night, and it seemed like all the boys tried to make up for the way the rest of the population had treated her.

Minnie Hughes had got so she'd hardly speak to her and give her dirt to her back pretty near every time she opened her mouth.

The dance was more'n half over and the old ladies and children had gone home to bed when Cecilia sets down in one of the front windows to rest between dances.

There was a whole bunch around her, and from the place where the stair steps come up into the hall you could only see the top of her golden head with a band of light blue ribbon around it.

Minnie Hughes had crowded close to where Cecilia sat lookin' awful pretty in her black dress against the white shade, which was pulled down behind her.

Some of the boys offered Minnie some preserved cherries, which they was all eatin' out of the bottle with their fingers. But she declined.

"I'm wearin' my gloves tonight," she says, looking hard at Cecilia's diamond, for she was boilin' over with rage and jealousy at Cecilia bein' the belle of the ball in place of her, as had been the case for a long time.

"I haven't got any diamond to show off now," she says, spiteful.

"That's too bad about your ring," says Cecilia, sympathetic. "What do you suppose could have become of it?"

"It's on your finger," says Minnie, her lip curlin'.

Cecilia went white.

She snatched the ring off and held it toward Minnie. At the same moment she braced her shoulders as though she'd been struck at, and then, before anybody realized it, there was a quick, dull sound, and out of the window she fell, for it was open, and the thin strip of wood in the shade had snapped. Below was the only piece of sandstone sidewalk in Clanahans.

It was so sudden everybody seemed paralyzed except Hick Fuller, who had presence of mind enough to grab one black satin toe, and in less time than it takes to tell it he had jumped to his feet and pulled her back from death, a pale, sick girl with a pretty badly sprained back.

Anyhow, that second was not too brief for a very important thing to happen. The conscience of every man and woman in that room got a wrench that brought them back to a sense of justice, so they were ready to receive Red Martin when he bounded into their midst.

He had heard and seen it all on his way across from the head of the stairs; he had pictured her maimed form on the stone walk below, and the skeer had all but made him faint, though he was plumb dauntless as a broncho buster and would fight a bear.

"Oh!" Cecilia says when she saw him bendin' over her. "Oh, but I'm glad you are back! Here's your ring," she says as she holds it out in her hand. "Tell them."

"It ain't my ring, girl," he says. "It was, but it's yours now," and he puts it back on her third finger and holds her hand to his lips.

She half set up on the bench where we'd laid her, then fell back pale as a ha'nt.

"Somebody run for water," begs Red, helpless and skeered.

"I'm all right," she says, stern and dignified. "But why does Mrs. Hughes say she once wore this ring?" and she draws her hand away from him.

"She did wear it," says old Red, with a groan. "She kept it for me a year. I had no safe place to keep it, and Bill and I were always pals. I ought to have told you. That's why I asked you to change your boardin' place. Minnie didn't like it when I asked her for the ring, and I was so afraid"—here he broke off and looked sheepish—"I was afraid she'd say somethin' to make you distrust me," he ends.

"But what about the package you sent off?" says Adolph, too interested in gettin' the mystery cleared up to keer for buttin' in.

"The package that I sent? When?" Cecilia asks.

"The day Red left," says Adolph.

"Oh, that!" she says and looks straight at Red in a meanin' way.

"It's none of their business," he says, furious.

"Tell them," she orders him. "Don't you see they have thought all along that I took her diamond? It must be explained."

Red got that dead beat look again.

"She sent back the plain gold engagement ring to the man she gave up for my sake," says Red. "I took my diamond to be set in a ring to fit her finger and had it expressed back to her, and she's goin' to marry me at once," he says through clinched teeth.

"And now," he says, gittin' on his feet and doublin' up his fists while the crowd edged back, "if that ain't enough and any pryin', scandal mongerin', long tongued son of a lyin' father wants to know any more about her and me collective or her or me individual let him meet me down there in front of this hall and help hisself to the grapes."

He glares at the whole lot of us a moment; then he turns and takes Cecilia's wraps from Hick Fuller, who has brought 'em up, and he asks her gentle if she can walk downstairs and across the street to the Citizens' or shall him and Hick carry her?

Nobody noticed till afterward that Bill Hughes' widow was gone.

A Punctured Metaphor.

"Did you write this note to Maria?" asked the young woman's mother.

"Yes," replied the susceptible youth.

"And you considered it proper to remark that her teeth were pearls?"

"It's customary to say things like that."

"Well, young man, let me tell you something. If Maria's teeth were pearls she wouldn't be wastin' 'em on ham and cabbage an' chocolate drops. She'd string 'em an' wear 'em around her neck an' take her chances on an imitation set of household jewelry for everyday work from the store."—Washington Star.

Solved.

Knicker—What would happen if an irresistible force met an immovable body? Bocker—The mule would kick itself.—New York Sun.

Intelligence is the mother of good luck.—Benjamin Franklin.